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## Newsletter - 1970-09-17

E. De la Garza

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FOR RELEASE: 17 September 1970

91-246

FROM: Kika de la Garza

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- A report prepared by the Soil Conservation Service, which I recently received, can be of great importance to South Texas. This report, a comprehensive study and plan of development for the Lower Rio Grande Basin, outlines a systematic approach to solving the Valley's complex flooding and drainage problems.

I believe that this plan, if carried out as outlined by the Soil Conservation Service, will be of tremendous benefit to the entire Rio Grande Valley. The project will reduce flood damage to rural and urban areas, and for the first time will provide adequate outlets for surface and sub-surface drainage. This is something our area has critically needed ever since the Valley was put under cultivation. Accordingly, I will introduce in the House of Representatives legislation authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to help state and local organizations carry out the plan of development proposed by the Soil Conservation Service.

The SCS report suggests a three-phase plan. Much of the necessary work will need to be done by local interests. Some will require help from the Federal government.

Phase One calls for a system of floodwater channels to be installed with Federal assistance.

Phase Two will consist of local watershed protection systems initiated and carried out by local groups, but with Federal assistance. None of this work can be done, however, until the floodwater channels proposed under Phase One are installed.

Phase Three calls for stepped-up conservation land treatment throughout the Valley to improve our farm and ranch lands. These improvements will permit effective, efficient irrigation and water management, and will enable landowners to install sub-surface drains that will cure their salinity problems. The work will have to be done by local landowners with technical and engineering assistance from the Soil Conservation Service. The result will be higher sustained agricultural earnings for the Valley -- good for all of us!!!

An example of the kind of severe flood damages which this kind of project would have prevented came in Willacy County early this past summer. During a two-week period, some areas of the county received between 14 and 17 inches of rain. Some 13,000 acres of grain sorghum and cotton were wiped out, and another 10,000 acres suffered at least a 50 percent loss. Altogether, the local economy was hit by a loss of more than \$3,000,000.

Such waste is unnecessary. We cannot afford to let it continue. I hope we can get the important three-phase plan underway in the near future.

\* \* \*

FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM -- Information about the National Flood Insurance Program, under which relief is offered to areas in which periodic flooding causing serious damage to residential areas has been sent by my office to the mayors of all cities in the 15<sup>th</sup> Congressional District -- and I will send it to anyone else in South Texas who is interested. The information includes a copy of program regulations, a check list outlining the steps a community must take in order to become eligible for flood insurance, a sample resolution that may be used for a community to make application, a copy of the law making the program possible, and an "Explanation of Statutory Requirements" of the program.

The initiative for flood insurance must be taken by the local governments. Upon their expression of interest and its receipt by the Federal Insurance Administration, that agency will provide the information and instructions to local officials about how to submit a complete application.

Unincorporated areas of Cameron County have become qualified under this program through an agreement to adopt land use and control measures that will minimize flood damage to future construction. Owners of existing 1-to-4 family residences and small businesses may now buy flood insurance from their local insurance agents at a low rate under the emergency program.

\* \* \*

TILT !! -- That's the cry that goes up when a player at a marble table puts too much body English into his efforts. And that is what many communities, including some in South Texas, are saying about the Census count this year. There have been so many protests that a subcommittee of the House Post Office Committee has announced plans to hold a special hearing on the matter. I have asked for time to appear before the panel on behalf of South Texas, and I hope mayors in our area who feel their cities have been low-counted will come to Washington and speak for themselves.

\* \* \*

FANCY CARS -- Much has been written lately about low cost leases of cars to public officials by the major car companies. I am somewhat embarrassed to say I am still driving a 1964 vintage. The only person with an older car than I on Capitol Hill is our good friend Fishbait Miller, the Doorkeeper for the House of Representatives. South Texans will recognize him when I tell you he is the one you see on television who comes into the House Chamber and says, "Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States". Fishbait drives a 1937 version of something that will be nameless.

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